

Appreciating Our Seniors

Boris Johnson

Appreciating Our Seniors

When people talk of London as a diverse city, they usually mean our great cultural and ethnic mix. But London also boasts a great mix of ages; while some places can be characterised as 'young' cities and others are known as retirement towns, London defies such descriptions, with a significant older population living alongside a younger one.¹

If elected as Mayor of London in May, I will work to improve our city for *all* Londoners, including the more than one million pensioners who live in the capital.

The biggest concern for many older Londoners is that the fear of crime prevents them from living their lives fully and freely. Those who have given much to our communities deserve to have special recognition and support.

If older Londoners have seen the neighbourhoods they have known for decades decline into dangerous territory, and if every journey they make on public transport is tainted by fear and suspicion, it is understandable that they might want to retreat from London life. But I refuse to accept this situation.

I reject the notion that there must be no-go areas in our city, and that our older population must resign themselves to lives led in fear.

My primary goal as Mayor of London will be to tackle crime and return a feeling of safety to our streets, to ensure that *everyone* can participate in the life, culture and economy of the greatest city on earth – regardless of their age or the neighbourhood they live in.

We must work to make London more age-friendly by improving transport services, protecting and extending the Freedom Pass, and ensuring accessibility to public services. It is also important to recognise that community-based enterprises like local Post Offices and small shops are vital for older Londoners, and they must be protected accordingly.

It is said that you can judge a place and a people by the way they treat their elderly citizens. Under my Mayoralty I am certain that London will be judged as a civilised place; a city that cares for and acknowledges its older citizens.

¹ WHO, Global Age Friendly Cities, 2007.

My Pledges

I will:

1. Make London Safer

- Chair the Metropolitan Police Authority to make our streets safer.
- Stand up against excessive police form-filling and support the scrapping of the stop and account form, lobbying the Government hard for its removal.
- Expect Police Community Support Officers to take some of the administrative burden from police officers, so they can spend more time out on the streets.
- Crack down on binge-drinking and 'name and shame' councils that fail to use their powers to tackle the problem.

2. Help Older Londoners Get Around Safely

- Protect and extend the Freedom Pass by working with the local councils (who fund it) to make it valid 24 hours a day.
- Increase safety on buses by doubling the amount of police officers on patrol, adding 440 extra officers; and fund 50 extra fully-warranted British Transport Police Officers to patrol the worst railway stations in outer London.
- Crack down on the young people who create trouble on the buses through the Payback London scheme, which will withdraw their right to free bus travel and allow them to earn it back by undertaking community service.
- Work with the Government and train operators to make more overground stations step-free.

3. Make London Age Friendly

- Encourage developers to design safer walkways, better paving, and greener spaces into new developments, including in the Thames Gateway.
- Preserve the existence of small, independent shops through better protection in planning legislation.
- Improve open spaces in London, and work with local councils to improve street cleanliness.

- Safeguard domestic gardens by preventing developments on them.
- Improve respect for older people by encouraging organisations to recruit older people as volunteers, including for the Olympics.
- Instruct the London Skills and Employment Board to run a campaign to promote age equality in the work place.

4. Fight For Essential Public Services

- Support local health services by campaigning against closures and fighting to save local GP services.
- Campaign to protect Post Offices.
- Encourage awareness and take-up of entitlements by older people, especially Council Tax, through a 'Your Rights' information campaign.
- Introduce an automatic one-off Council Tax rebate to encourage home insulation, making homes warmer and more environmentally friendly.

1. Making London Safer

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Making Streets Safer

We need to restore confidence in the justice system, and the first step is to restore safety to London's streets. Confidence in the justice system has reduced amongst people aged over 55 years – fewer than one in five feel the needs of victims of crime are met.²

Violent crime in London has risen under Ken Livingstone.³ In 2006-07 alone, over 230,000 violent crimes were recorded in London, including over 45,000 robberies and over 9,000 sexual offences.⁴ To begin to tackle this, we believe there must be a **crackdown on the culture of incivility on our streets.**

This means cutting the bureaucracy faced by police officers. Red tape reduces police time on the beat. Last year the Metropolitan Police stopped 384,115 people.⁵ After each encounter the officers involved are required to fill in a foot-long form which takes, on average, 25 minutes.⁶ This means that last year a staggering 160,048 police hours were wasted filling in one type of form. Ending the stop and account form would mean that police could spend an extra 160,048 hours on the beat – the equivalent of adding 78 new officers to the force.⁷ Therefore, we will actively support calls to scrap this form, and will lobby the Government to that effect.

² British Crime Survey 2006/7, table 5.02. Just 18% in each category (55-64 years old and 65-74 years old) felt victims' needs were met compared with 21% in each group in the 2005/6 BCS, table 3.04.

³ Home Office, Crime in England and Wales.

⁴ Home Office, Crime in England and Wales 2006/2007, July 2007.

⁵ MPA Stop and Account figures, December 2006 – November 2007.

⁶ Sir Ronnie Flanagan, 'Review of Policing; Interim Report', Home Office, September 2007.

⁷ Ibid. On average an officer works 2057 hours per year.

We also need to look at stop and search. It is well known that this form-filling is time consuming and keeps police officers off the streets. Stop and searches should still be recorded by an officer, who will radio in essential details of the search – thereby allowing them to be recorded without the extra burden of having to fill in a form at the scene and a further form back at the station.

We will make reducing form-filling and bureaucracy a key strategic priority, so that police can do what they do best; protecting Londoners. We must focus on allowing the police to do their jobs, and we must end the culture of target-setting that has destroyed Londoners' confidence in the police.

This requires a Mayor who will prioritise cutting red tape, but this has not been a priority for Ken Livingstone. The latest local policing plan (the strategy produced by the MPA and endorsed by the Labour Chair Len Duvall and Sir Ian Blair until 2010) does not include cutting red tape as one of its main strategic priorities.⁸ This demonstrates that the current leadership is out of touch, and we will seek to amend the plan to include this as a key strategic priority.

Stamping Out Binge Drinking

We will encourage London's councils to do more with their powers to crack down on binge drinking and alcohol-related violence, which are major problems in town centres across London. The GLA itself found that alcohol is implicated in 40% of incidents of violence crime.⁹ Violent crime in London has increased by 13.7% over the last 8 years,¹⁰ and alcohol-related hospital admissions are also up.¹¹

It is quite wrong that town centres are becoming no-go areas every Friday and Saturday night and something needs to be done. In addition to getting more police on the streets, we need to tackle the problem at its core and get tough with bars and shops that break the rules. We must make alcohol harder to buy for under-18s in order to tackle the problem of underage drinking and deal with alcohol-related violence.

Local councils have the power to take action against bars, clubs and off-licences that sell alcohol out of hours, or to under-18s. The Licensing Act 2003 allows councils to initiate a review of licences at any time, and take immediate action to withdraw licences. Councils such as the London Borough of Bexley have taken a pro-active approach and achieved good results – their initiative led to a 22% drop in violent crime – and they are now the toughest council in London.

⁸ 'Policing London', Metropolitan Police Authority, 2007.

⁹ http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/health/drugs_and_alcohol/policy_summary.jsp

¹⁰ The latest Met Police figures for February 2008 show that, compared with February 2000, violent crime increased from 11,650 to 13,245, an increase of 13.7%. MPS Crime Figures Financial Year 2000/1 and 2006/7.

¹¹ The number of under-18s hospitalised for alcohol misuse has increased by nearly 40% since 2000. Last year, 8,245 under-18s were admitted to hospital via A&E for alcohol misuse. Hansard, 8 January 2008, col. 461W.

Following discussions with local councils, we are proposing a three-point plan:

- 'Name and shame' the councils that perform badly on stamping out binge drinking.
- Publish league tables naming and shaming the councils that do not use their new powers to crack down on binge drinking.
- Use the Mayor's influence as chair of the MPA to ensure that police officers take a more proactive approach to confiscating alcohol from underage drinkers.

Taking Responsibility

This focused effort to make London's streets safer will be achieved by taking leadership, taking responsibility and taking control of the Metropolitan Police Authority.

The Mayor of London has the right to Chair the Metropolitan Police Authority – the body set up to scrutinise and support the work of the Metropolitan Police Service – and to set its strategic direction. Boris Johnson will exercise this right so that there is a direct link between the police and the Mayor, so the Mayor is more accountable for what happens in the police.

Chairing the MPA will enable the Mayor to get directly involved with the day-to-day scrutiny of the police and get more officers on the streets.¹² It will also mean that the police are more accountable to Londoners.

The Commissioner is required to submit a local policing plan to the MPA for its consideration. We will draft a new local policing plan, in consultation with the Commissioner, which will have as its priority making the streets of London safer and increasing the number of police on the beat by reducing unnecessary form-filling for police officers.

We will also expect each Borough Commander to hold open public meetings every month to make the police more accountable to local residents.

Strengthening Police Community Support Officers

PCSOs are a valuable part of the Metropolitan Police, and have an important role to play. Yet Londoners are not willing to give them their full support, because they know their powers are limited.

¹² "The Mayor of London sets the annual budget for five functional bodies, which have become known as the 'GLA Group'. The group comprises the Metropolitan Police Authority, the Greater London Authority, Transport for London, the London Development Agency and London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority." The MPA budget factsheet, <http://www.mpa.gov.uk/about/publications/factsheets/mpa-budget.htm>

We will work with the Commissioner and the Home Office to investigate what further powers PCSOs in London could have.

We will also work with the Commissioner to ensure that PCSOs take some of the administrative burden from fully-warranted police officers, so that more time can be spent on the beat.

2. Helping Older Londoners Get Around Safely

I will:

- **Protect and extend the Freedom Pass by working with the local councils (who fund it) to make it valid 24 hours a day.**
- **Increase safety on buses by doubling the amount of police officers on patrol, adding 440 extra officers; and fund 50 extra fully-warranted British Transport Police Officers to patrol the worst railway stations in outer London.**
- **Crack down on the young people who create trouble on the buses through the Payback London scheme, which will withdraw their right to free bus travel and allow them to earn it back by undertaking community service.**
- **Work with the Government and train operators to make more overground stations step-free.**

Protecting The Freedom Pass

One in three Londoners is aged over 55, and as people get older mobility can become a bigger concern.¹³ At the moment the Freedom Pass cannot be used between 4.30am and 9am, meaning it is more difficult for elderly people to make early morning appointments with, for instance, their local GP. Last year Transport for London (TfL) – which is chaired by Ken Livingstone – threatened future funding for the Freedom Pass.¹⁴ This uncertainty must stop.

For those who are entitled to the Freedom Pass, **I will protect it as an untouchable right**, and I will, unlike the current Labour Mayor, work with the borough councils (who fund it) to make it operational for 24 hours a day.

Safer Buses

Many people no longer feel safe on the buses. Londoners should be able to travel on the bus without fear of intimidation or worse. We need to **defeat the kind of low-level crime committed on public transport** that makes people's lives a misery, and often leads to more serious crime. The London Assembly Transport Committee found that crime on buses increased by over 17% between 2004-05 and 2006-07,¹⁵

¹³ Age Concern, Submission on the London Housing Strategy, 2005-2016, February 2005.

¹⁴ Freedom Pass Safe In Our Hands, London Councils, 30 January 2007.

¹⁵ London Assembly Transport Committee, Crime and Disorder on London's Buses, January 2008, page 8.

and drug offences on buses by 63.3%.¹⁶ Yet Ken Livingstone has steadfastly refused to acknowledge an increase in anti-social behaviour. It is simply unacceptable that gangs treat buses as glorified getaway vehicles and that passengers have to endure being spat at, verbally abused or worse.

Therefore, I will release funds that Ken Livingstone has earmarked for TfL advertising and press officers to be spent on approximately **440 PCSOs to be added to the existing Safer Transport Teams, doubling their strength.**¹⁷ And I will release funds that Ken Livingstone has earmarked for police advertising and press officers to be spent on approximately **50 extra fully-warranted British Transport Police Officers to patrol the worst stations in outer London.**¹⁸

A greater police presence on buses and trains and at transport hubs such as bus stops and rail platforms will **act as a visible deterrent to anti-social behaviour.**

We will also invest £150,000 to trial live CCTV for 20 of the most dangerous bus routes in London. This trial will run for a six-month period to assess the success of the scheme before rolling out across the network.¹⁹

Improving Buses And Bus Routes

We also want to improve access to buses for older Londoners. This means both improving the buses themselves and **ensuring that ramps and other mobility facilities are fully functioning** before they leave the depot.

It also means improving bus routes so that people living in outer London do not have to travel into London to reach a neighbouring area. For example, a journey from Bromley to Sutton covering 11 miles can take up to three interchanges and two hours using public transport. By car it takes just 30 minutes.²⁰ It is impossible for Londoners to get from Bexley to Richmond without first going into central London.²¹ We will **commission a trial of orbital express bus routes for outer London, connecting key hubs**, and consult widely with local residents and councils before tendering them on a trial basis.

¹⁶ TfL Press Release, 20 November 2007, using combined six month figures for the years 2006 and 2007.

¹⁷ Transport for London forecast that they will spend £66 million on advertising, marketing and communications in 2007/08 (GLA Group Budget Proposals and Precepts 2008-09; Consultation Document, p 82). This is an overspend of 65% on their original budget of £40 million. We propose to cap their spending in real terms, raising it to £67.3 million, rather than the £84 million Mr Livingstone wants (GLA Group Budget Report 08/09 at p82). £16.5 million of the money saved will be redirected to the existing Safer Transport Teams and will pay for an approximate 440 additional PCSOs, doubling their strength. £150,000 of the additional money saved will also be used to fund the trial of live CCTV on buses. On 12 March 2008, TfL announced that it would reduce its overspend to £63 million, although it is unclear where the money has been allocated. We will still allocate £16.5 million from the advertising, marketing and communications budget to pay for more police from whichever of the two budget figures TfL finally decides on.

¹⁸ This will be funded by releasing £3.1 million that has been earmarked for MPS advertising and spin doctors. The MPA estimates the full cost of an officer at £54,000. Provision of Additional Police Officers on Boroughs, MPA, 10 January 2008.

¹⁹ See footnote 17 for costings.

²⁰ Timings for public transport taken from TfL Journey Planner and timings for the car taken from the RAC Journey Planner.

²¹ See TfL Journey Planner for more details.

Payback London

Whilst we think it's great that under-18s can travel on our buses for free, there is a growing minority that abuse that right; who intimidate other passengers through threatening and anti-social behaviour. We believe the right to travel for free on buses must be balanced with the **responsibility to behave** and show respect for other passengers.

If that responsibility is ignored we will take away the right to free travel from those who abuse it, and we will expect them to **earn it back** by doing work with existing community service schemes, which might mean cleaning up graffiti, volunteering in community centres or other helpful local activities.

Step-Free Stations

We will seek to **secure more funds to make overground stations step-free** by instructing Transport for London to work with train operators to identify stations in London that are located in areas with a high proportion of elderly people, and that do not currently offer adequate access, to secure investment from the Government's national £370 million Access for All station upgrade fund.²²

Dial-a-Ride

We support the Dial-a-Ride system to help older Londoners get road transport from door-to-door, especially for people with disabilities. This scheme was launched by the borough councils and was recently taken over by TfL. However, there are still serious failings in the booking system for rides. TfL said it would finally sort this out two years ago – but according to papers released by TfL in February 2008, this has still not happened.²³ We will **make it a priority to implement a new, smoothly operating booking system for Dial-a-Ride**.

Blue Badges

We will support borough councils that **crack down on the abuse of blue badge parking spaces**, as well as protecting the exemption provided to blue badge holders from the Congestion Charge.

²² Department for Transport, More stations to be made accessible, 31 January 2008.

²³ TfL Board Meeting Papers, 6 February 2008, page 51.

3. Making London Age Friendly

I will:

- **Encourage developers to design safer walkways, better paving, and greener spaces in new developments, including in the Thames Gateway.**
- **Preserve the existence of small, independent shops through better protection in planning legislation.**
- **Improve open spaces in London, and work with local councils to improve street cleanliness.**
- **Safeguard domestic gardens by preventing developments on them.**
- **Improve respect for older people by encouraging organisations to recruit older people as volunteers, including for the Olympics.**

Regenerating Outer London

We want thriving London suburbs, with vibrant high streets, so that older Londoners can access services in their local area without feeling the need to travel into central London or an out-of-town shopping centre to access facilities. These services include the local Post Office, small shops, and a local GP.

It is estimated that around 7,000 small shops in London have closed over the last six years.²⁴ The latest survey of small shops in the capital, conducted by the London Chamber of Commerce, found that the top two pressures cited by independent shops are competition from supermarkets (78%) and rising rents (67%).²⁵ The Competition Commission recently raised concerns over the impact of supermarkets, calling for local planning authorities to adopt a 'competition test' to decide whether a new store should go ahead. This would mean planners would be able to stop a supermarket chain building another store in an area if they already had local dominance.²⁶ Supermarkets can hold an incredibly dominant market share. According to data from CACI, for example, Tesco holds a 47% market share in Twickenham.²⁷

²⁴ The Evening Standard Save Our Small Shops campaign at <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23411591-details/Save+Our+Small+Shops/article.do>.

²⁵ London Chamber of Commerce, London Small Shops Survey, 2007.

²⁶ Competition Commission, The supply of groceries in the UK market provision, 31 October 2007.

²⁷ IGD Convenience Retailing Report, 2005.

Property costs are a serious concern for small retailers, and with good reason: they are currently rising much faster than sales growth.²⁸ The UK is the only country in Europe to fuse long leases with upward rent reviews.²⁹

We need to **preserve small, independent shops**. We will amend the London Plan to help protect them by encouraging borough councils to use a section 106 (or the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy proposed under the Planning and Regeneration Bill) to secure a proportion of 'affordable' units for small, independent retailers in large retail developments.

Ken Livingstone has neglected London's suburbs. Over 4.6 million people live in London's 19 outer boroughs, and around one third of them is aged over 50.³⁰ To complement the London Plan we will produce a separate strategy on how to **encourage sustainable suburbs** in London. Central to this strategy will be the protection of small shops.

'Lifelong Neighbourhoods'

We want a London where new developments build strong communities that will last. This means planners giving greater attention to building 'age-friendly' developments for the future, to include features such as better paving and kerbs, improved street lighting, better positioned bus stops and access to toilets and other amenities.

The current London Plan does not adequately reflect the need for new communities, such as those in the Thames Gateway, to be designed for older people. The latest version of the London Plan, published by Ken Livingstone, does not even mention the issue of age.

We will therefore amend the London Plan throughout to ensure that it **addresses the needs of older Londoners** in new developments. For example, Policy 2A.9 on sustainable communities requires new developments to have childcare facilities within 'walking distance'. We would amend this to include facilities for older residents as well. In particular, new developments forming the Thames Gateway should be built to encourage age-friendly neighbourhoods.

We will also work with borough councils to ensure that Local Development Frameworks, agreed with the Mayor, meet the needs of an ageing society to improve the supply and quality of housing. By promoting 'Lifelong Neighbourhoods' in the London Plan, we will be able to build sustainable communities for the future.

²⁸ IGD Convenience Retailing Report, 2005.

²⁹ High Street Britain: 2015, All Party Small Shops Group, House of Commons, 2006.

³⁰ London Assembly, Semi-detached: connecting London's suburbs, June 2007, page 27.

We would also welcome this approach being applied to existing town centres, with town planners **encouraging better signage and access to shops, theatres and restaurants**, especially to help disabled Londoners.

Making Developments Secure

The fear of crime dramatically reduces people's quality of life. The Association of Chief Police Officers has devised a series of design principles named 'Secured By Design' (SBD), that have been incorporated into many new developments across the country to cut crime and increase residents' quality of life.

SBD principles include creating defensible space; organising the built environment so that anti-social behaviour is less likely to be ignored, such as houses that face each other; creating space that generalises a sense of ownership, such as front gardens, rather than space which promotes anonymity; and promoting natural surveillance from residents' houses.

Houses that meet SBD standards experience a quarter less crime than non-SBD houses, and residents' fear of crime is lower.³¹ For instance, a study by Bedfordshire Police reported crime and disorder on a 4,500-home development incorporating SBD principles will average approximately 680 incidents a year. The same number of homes in an estate incorporating the Government's planning principles will result in 4,080 crime and disorder incidents a year, six times as many as on a SBD development.³²

Despite this evidence, Ken Livingstone is failing to prioritise the principles of designing out crime. He mentions them only once in his statutory Draft Housing Strategy. We will **make designing out crime a key priority** in the London Plan and the Mayor's Housing Strategy, to prevent creating poor-quality housing where crime flourishes.

Making London Greener

Litter, graffiti and fly-tipping damage London's environment, encourage more serious crimes and affect Londoners' quality of life. These activities send a message to offenders that no-one cares about an area and that it is free to 'trash', leading to rising crime.

We have to help the boroughs to make our capital cleaner and safer for all Londoners. MORI's Annual London Surveys consistently show that more than half of Londoners do not believe London is a clean city. The latest figures for London show a 22% annual rise in fly-tipping incidents and a total of nearly 600,000 incidents dealt

³¹ Home Office press release, Design Alliance: fighting crime from the drawing board, 14 August 2007.

³² Bedfordshire Police, The Cost of Policing New Urbanism, April 2003, page 3.

with by the boroughs in 2006-07, at a total cost of nearly £20 million³³ – but there were only 293 prosecutions for fly-tipping in the same period.³⁴ We will **push for prosecutions in all instances of fly-tipping**.

We also want to see information on fly-tipping and graffiti incorporated into New York-style crime maps. These will provide accurate, up-to-date information for Londoners to hold their local councils to account, and will enable councils to target areas where these offences frequently occur.

In addition to **protecting London's green belt** by using the Mayor's powers to refuse any applications to build on it, we will protect London's gardens. In recent years, London has lost domestic front gardens equivalent to twenty-two times the size of Hyde Park – or the combined equivalent of Hammersmith and Fulham and Islington – to concrete.³⁵ In 2006 alone, 1,133 London gardens were used for new build.³⁶ London has also suffered a net loss of 32 allotment sites, or 4.2% over the last decade in London.³⁷

There is now considerable pressure from the Government for higher housing density. For instance, Planning Policy Guidance 3 (2000) details "efficient use of land",³⁸ and the re-classification of domestic gardens under PPG3 has dramatically reduced domestic gardens' protection. We will reverse this by bringing forward further alterations to the London Plan to **protect domestic gardens**, by adding a presumption to Policy 3D.9 that domestic gardens will not be used for residential development. This will make a real difference. Since the existing London Plan was published, the proportion of residential land – including gardens – in the capital used for new build has increased. It is imperative that the new housing needed in the capital is not built at the expense of existing open green spaces.

More Affordable Housing

There are real concerns over pensioner poverty in the capital, together with the access to permanent, desirable, and affordable housing. In some boroughs, half the social housing tenants will be over 65 years old, and around 36% of pensioners are officially living below the poverty line when housing costs are taken into account.³⁹

To meet the housing needs of older Londoners, we will increase the supply of affordable housing by building 50,000 more affordable homes by 2011. We will work with the boroughs to agree a unit build of new homes each year, and will focus on

³³ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/flytipping/pdf/2006-07-flycapture-london.pdf>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ London Assembly, Offside: The Loss of London's Playing Fields, May 2006 and London Assembly, Crazy Paving: The environmental importance of London's front gardens, September 2005.

³⁶ London Assembly Environment Committee, Garden Grabbing Update, 11 October 2007, page 2. Last year, 10% of planning approvals in Croydon were on domestic gardens, 7% in Sutton, and between 5-7% in Bromley, Ealing, Enfield, and Hillingdon.

³⁷ A lot to lose: London's disappearing allotments. London Assembly Environment Committee October 2006.

³⁸ Department for Communities and Local Government, Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, 29 November 2006.

³⁹ Age Concern, Submission on the London Housing Strategy, 2005-2016, February 2005.

those boroughs with the greatest housing waiting list needs. Our approach will also prioritise the quality as well as the quantity of new affordable homes – we want homes that are not just ‘decent’ but also desirable.

There are two other types of housing that we need to give greater attention to in the London Plan. We want to champion independent living, but the Government’s independent living grant for the UK, administered by local authorities, will increase by just 1% over the next three years under the Comprehensive Spending Review – despite extra demand.⁴⁰ We will call on the Government to increase the level of funding for the independent living grant allocated to London Councils.

The local government settlement for London is also a disgrace, with 29 of the 32 boroughs on the ‘floor’ – in other words, receiving a below inflation increase – which is putting social services under severe strain and limiting the opportunity for older people to live independently.

Wherever possible, we want to support people to live independently in their own home, but where necessary we want to ensure that there is adequate provision of supported accommodation for elderly Londoners, with a warden living on site. This means increasing the supply of sheltered accommodation, which still affords some independence to individuals. The Housing Federation and the Housing Corporation have identified a severe shortfall of supported accommodation in London.⁴¹ We will match the increase of new supported accommodation units by 400 homes each year from 2008 to 2011, and the funding for this will be met through the Regional Housing Pot.

Respecting Older People

It is shocking that almost two out of three Londoners aged over 50 have experienced ageism.⁴² We need to campaign in the capital to ensure that older Londoners receive the respect and support that they deserve. We believe the Olympics and Paralympics must play a role here. Over 100,000 people have registered to volunteer for the 2012 Games, and **older people must be central to the Olympic volunteering strategy.**

We will encourage London 2012 to devise projects, like those operated by the Voluntary Services Council, to get older people helping with schools sports. There are also a range of tasks, from press organisation through to spectator services, where we believe the skills, experience and knowledge of older people will add real value to the 2012 Games.

⁴⁰ National Centre for Independent Living, *Our Lives, Our Choices*, 2007.

⁴¹ London Housing Federation/GLA/Housing Corporation, *Building For All: Identifying the Need for Supported Housing in London*, May 2007.

⁴² Age Concern, *How Ageist Is London?*, 2007.

Furthermore, we will **instruct the London Skills and Employment Board to run a campaign to promote age equality in the work place.** Large numbers of Londoners aged over 55 are working, but face discrimination in the work place and in job interviews. The Mayor of London must use his office to promote equality at work, including at the GLA itself.

4. Fighting For Essential Services

I will:

- **Support local health services by campaigning against closures and fighting to save local GP services.**
- **Campaign to protect Post Offices.**
- **Encourage awareness and take-up of entitlements by older people, especially Council Tax, through a 'Your Rights' information campaign.**
- **Introduce an automatic one-off Council Tax rebate to encourage home insulation, making homes warmer and more environmentally friendly.**

Fighting Hospital Closures

The Government's plans to impose 150 polyclinics on the capital threaten accessibility to local services. Londoners must be able to access services as close as possible to their home, and this is especially important as people get older, or experience reduced mobility.

Polyclinics could also herald the end of the family doctor in London. Though 89% of patients value knowing their doctor by name, polyclinics could mean the end of the personalised NHS.⁴³ This downgrading of the patient-doctor relationship threatens continuity of care as polyclinics will also reduce GPs' referral role for patients at a time when we should be increasing their commissioning responsibilities.

As the British Medical Association states, "we believe that the non-involvement of a GP practice in the urgent care of a registered patient would inevitably be detrimental to that patient as not only does using the knowledge of the patient history and medical record held at GP and primary health care team level help to avoid inappropriate hospital admissions, but the coordination of patient care at this level will lead to the best possible health outcomes."⁴⁴ **I will fight to stop family doctors being forced into polyclinics.**

London's hospitals, from St. Mary's at Sidcup to Chase Farm at Enfield, are already witnessing key services such as Accident & Emergency units under threat, and further cuts are looming under the Government's plans to centralise London's NHS. Older patients make up the majority of the 23% of patients who require hospital admission, but who spend over four hours in Accident & Emergency. Reducing

⁴³ BMA, Response to Lord Darzi's review 'Healthcare for London: A framework for action', September 2007.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

access could increase waiting times further, which is not acceptable. I want to see **full Accident & Emergency services across London**. Those extra minutes in an ambulance could mean the difference between life and death.

There are 23 acute hospital trusts in London, but under the Government's plans for the capital's NHS, Healthcare for London, this number will be reduced. If the plans are carried out, all local hospitals could be downgraded with patients requiring critical care being transferred to a major acute hospital.⁴⁵ This is against the advice of professionals, including the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AMRC) which has unequivocally stated: "It is essential to have high level intensive care skills on site 24/7 to support any hospital receiving emergencies".⁴⁶

London's community hospitals are also unprotected in the Government's plans. **We support community hospitals as vital services to the community**. We need to ensure they are not undermined by Healthcare for London with urgent clarification on their role and future.

Protecting Post Offices

The undermining of London's Post Office network, which disproportionately affects older people, must stop. Half of Londoners aged over 65 visit their local Post Office more than once a week, and half of London's Post Offices have closed since Ken Livingstone became Mayor.⁴⁷

The current closures are the second wave in the last eight years. Under the Government's so-called Urban Reinvention Programme, 319 Post Offices closed in the capital between 2002-5; and now a further 171 Post Offices will be axed from service.⁴⁸ This includes two closures in Bexley, five in Redbridge and more than one in four Post Offices in Wandsworth.⁴⁹ This is especially disruptive for older people with disabilities.

Post Offices are crucial in supporting local retail, meaning that a Post Office closure may trigger a domino-effect of other local closures.⁵⁰ The latest wave of closures now means people have a reduced security of service, with the nearest Post Office only having to be within a mile. This is a significantly longer distance than that specified for the 2005 closures, which was at least half a mile. If this continues, it will soon be 2 miles to the nearest Post Office.

⁴⁵ Healthcare for London, A Framework for Action, 11 July 2007, page 98.

⁴⁶ Acute health care services, report of a working party, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, September 2007, page 21.

⁴⁷ The Post Office Network, CAB, March 2007.

⁴⁸ Post Offices in London: future directions, Health and Public Services Committee, London Assembly, July 2007, paragraph 1.3.

⁴⁹ <http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/Home/MyWandsworth/Newsextra/postoffice.htm> and

http://www.redbridge.gov.uk/cms/news__events/latest_news/planned_post_office_closures.aspx

⁵⁰ This is based on revenue loss projections made by Post Office Ltd, and obtained by the Federation of sub-Post Masters. See 1,000 village shops may close with post offices, The Daily Telegraph, 17 March 2008.

We will amend the London Plan to recognise the need for a Post Office to be within walking distance of residents, and will continue to **campaign against the proposed closures in all parts of London, from Wandsworth to Bexley.**

Warmer Homes

We will continue to support measures for warmer homes. To encourage home insulation schemes that make homes both warmer and environmentally friendly, we will **introduce a Council Tax rebate scheme**, funded by the energy companies, to get more cavity wall and loft insulation installed. 75 local authorities are currently working with British Gas to offer one-off Council Tax rebates to their residents who install home insulation. The schemes have proved to be very popular, with research by one of the participating councils showing that 78% of customers would not have installed insulation without the Council Tax rebate offer.⁵¹ We will encourage London boroughs to work with energy companies to offer Council Tax rebate schemes to their residents, in order to encourage them to install insulation.

Encouraging Benefits Take-Up

People who have worked hard all their lives should be able to claim the benefits to which they are entitled. Means testing and form filling add to the stigma that often surrounds claiming – and lead to millions of pounds left unclaimed. It is estimated that £4.2 billion in benefits for older people go unclaimed each year – whether that is rebate on rent, Carers Allowance, or Council Tax relief.⁵²

We need an information campaign to ensure that older people are able to access financial help when they require it. We believe one of the most successful ways to ensure older Londoners claim Government money to which they are entitled is by providing relevant information in their Council Tax bill. We will **work with London councils to start an annual ‘Your Rights’ information campaign** to take place when Council Tax bills go out so that Londoners can access the benefits to which they are entitled.

⁵¹ Figures from British Gas.

⁵² Help The Aged, Financial Advice, 2008.

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